



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1993/L.4/Add.3
1 March 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-seventh session
22 February-3 March 1993
Agenda item 13 (b) and (c)

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

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Chapter____. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP),
Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) Programme and the
Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS)

1. The Commission considered item 13 (b) and (c) of its agenda at its 458th meeting, on 25 February 1993. It had before it two joint reports of the Secretary-General and the World Bank, one reviewing progress in the implementation of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Programme (SDA) (E/CN.3/1993/18), and the other detailing selected issues between the NHSCP and LSMS/SDA (E/CN.3/1993/19).
2. The Commission welcomed the joint report on selected issues and expressed its satisfaction that its appeals at its twenty-sixth session for the programmes of NHSCP and SDA/LSMS to work in closer coordination and cooperation had been heeded. It noted that the most effective cooperation was at the country level, though it should be more systematized and was pleased to cite the example of Mali (E/CN.3/1993/19, annex). It also noted that coordination at the country level had to be supplemented by coordination at the programme level, which it was pleased to see had been effective, particularly with respect to development of technical materials.

3. The Commission found the progress report to be a helpful review, noting that the three programmes underlined the capability of household surveys in many countries, despite difficulties encountered in their implementation.

4. The Commission stated that institution-building at the country level was a critical component in the development and application of household survey methodology and urged that, with regard to Africa, the future strategy for development of household surveys should be promoted within the context of the Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s (E/ECA/CM.18/10/Add.1).

5. The Commission urged that future initiatives with respect to NHSCP and SDA/LSMS should emphasize the policy relevance of surveys, noting that for decision makers the construction of such useful products as poverty profiles was invaluable and should be continued and expanded. Several examples of how the survey data were being used for policy design purposes were cited, but the view was also expressed that much fuller use could still be made of them and that further efforts were needed to promote such usage. It was urged that more work be done to develop "light" surveys or those with quick turnaround.

6. The Commission recognized that many of the differences in approach, methodology and objectives between the NHSCP and LSMS/SDA were unavoidable, but those differences should not inhibit the agencies from working closely together, especially at the country level. It was noted that, with respect to data requirements, the SDA programme was more ambitious than NHSCP in terms of its requirements for timeliness but that SDA drew upon the experience of NHSCP in developing countries where the latter has been instrumental in establishing household survey capability.

7. Some of the methodological differences between NHSCP and SDA, such as the use or lack of master samples, were noted, but again it was agreed that those differences correctly reflected the objectives of the survey within a particular country and should not be seen as competing methodological strategies.

8. Some members pointed out that the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers at its seventh session, in March 1992, had endorsed the African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP), the regional component of NHSCP, as one of the most useful programmes of the African region. The uniqueness of NHSCP as an "umbrella" programme was also noted, since it drew the best out of all components of the United Nations system - i.e., the regional commissions, the specialized agencies and the United Nations Secretariat - through its networking arrangements of coordination. It was urged that the core components of NHSCP be institutionalized within the context of the regular programmes of technical cooperation of the United Nations system.

9. The Commission noted that the experiences of African countries in implementing poverty monitoring systems using the household survey programmes could be of relevance and interest to countries elsewhere experiencing similar rapid social and economic change.

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10. At the regional level, the Commission was informed of much progress with respect to the implementation of continuing household surveys, including training in methodology, in several countries of ECLAC and ECA and also with respect to the utilization of results such as social indicators on the poverty situation of those countries.

Action taken by the Commission

The Commission:

(a) Expressed its appreciation of the improved spirit of cooperation between the NHSCP, LSMS and SDA programmes;

(b) Supported the importance of promoting such cooperation at the country level first and foremost, while at the same time extending such cooperation up to the programme level;

(c) Recognized that the policy-relevance of the surveys was very important and that continued efforts were needed to promote full use of the survey results;

(d) Agreed that methodological differences were unavoidable but should not be a barrier to cooperation;

(e) Encouraged countries implementing poverty-monitoring based on household surveys to share their experiences with other countries not participating in the NHSCP, LSMS or SDA;

(f) Urged that the core components of the NHSCP be institutionalized within the context of regular programmes of technical cooperation of the United Nations system.
